



**Office of the Attorney General
Paul G. Summers**

**Department of Commerce and Insurance
Commissioner Paula Flowers**

NEWS RELEASE

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**ATTORNEY GENERAL ASSISTS FTC TO WARN ADVERTISERS AND MEDIA THAT
ADS TARGETING HISPANICS MAY BE DECEPTIVE**

The Tennessee Attorney General's Office is helping the Federal Trade Commission and other federal, state and local agencies to be on the alert for unscrupulous advertisers targeting Hispanics with deceptive ads. Warnings were sent out to these advertisers and publishers in conjunction with a national FTC press conference on the issue today in New York City.

The agencies recently found dozens of deceptive ads primarily focusing on health, credit and business opportunities during a search of print, Internet, radio and TV targeting Hispanics across the country. Federal, state and local government and consumer agencies across the United States and in five Latin American countries participated in the Hispanic Multi-Media Surf.

"Tennessee has one of the fastest growing Hispanic populations in the country," said Attorney General Paul G. Summers, "and as a result, an increased number of companies are attempting to deceive people in our Spanish-speaking communities."

Over half of the potentially deceptive ads flagged by surf participants were health-related and made dubious claims regarding weight loss products and cures for diseases such as diabetes and cancer. Work-at-home and business opportunity ads with questionable claims represented the second

most common type of ads discovered during the surf. These advertisements mostly promised unsupported claims regarding get-rich-quick schemes for envelope stuffing or at-home craft assembly. Many ads made claims that consumers would receive extravagant earnings, but the FTC found few, if any, consumers actually achieve those. Surf participants also found credit-related ads offering credit repair and guaranteed credit.

Following the surf, the FTC sent educational letters to 166 advertisers and 77 media outlets warning them that their advertisements targeting Hispanics may be violating the law, and urged them to review their advertising and promotional materials. In addition to the letters, the FTC forwarded Internet ads to ten international law enforcement partners to review ads originating in their respective countries for appropriate action. The surf also provided law enforcement targets for several cases announced today by the FTC at the Hispanic Law Enforcement Forum in New York City.

Representatives from the Tennessee Attorney General's Office, other state Attorneys General offices, state and local consumer protection agencies, the Food and Drug Administration, United States Postal Inspection Service, Better Business Bureaus, and community-based groups, among others, participated in the FTC-coordinated surf. Consumer protection agencies in Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama also took part in the effort.

A sample FTC warning letter and a list of participants is available from the FTC's website at www.ftc.gov and also from the FTC's Consumer Response Center, Room 130, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20580. To file a complaint in English or Spanish, or to get free information on any of 150 consumer topics, call toll-free at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357) or complete the online complaint form at www.ftc.gov/ftc/complaint.htm.

Complaints regarding consumer matters can be also be filed with the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs by calling (615) 741-4737 or toll-free at 1-800-342-8385, or by completing the online complaint form at www.state.tn.us/consumer.